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Stanford (California), Stanford University Press, 2004, XIII + 355 p.

**Marie-Claire Bergère**

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## NOTE DE L'ÉDITEUR

Translated from the French original by Nick Oates

- 1 Following a preliminary exposition dedicated to summarising the theoretical debates on the origin and nature of Chinese nationalism (Chapter 1), Zhao Suisheng sets out to retrace the history of China over the past five hundred years in the light of this nationalism, which, he believes, represents a dimension of the analysis that has been greatly neglected both by specialists and by general opinion. As he treads this path, the author adopts a “primordialist” perspective (taking into consideration the solid, atavistic and emotional data concerning national identity) that is tempered by numerous elaborations on the instrumental character of a loyalty to the nation-state that has been constructed in rational fashion by “political entrepreneurs” in response to particular historical situations.
- 2 Zhao thus studies the origins of this nationalism, the emergence of which he situates in the second half of the nineteenth century at a time when Western aggression obliged the Chinese elite to call into question Confucian culturalism and to laud the construction of a nation-state in order to save China (Chapter 2). He then examines the transition of the nationalism of the elite (defined as that of the reformists at the end of empire, of Sun Yat-sen, Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang) towards a popular nationalism described here essentially as that of the Chinese Communist Party (Chapter 3). Chapter 4, dedicated to a comparative study of “liberal nationalism” (which is associated with the joint defence of the rights of the individual and those of the

nation), and state nationalism (lauded both by the Kuomintang as well as by the Communist Party), provides the author with the opportunity to analyse the successive flowerings and failures of moderate currents, partisans of a Third Way, before 1949 and of the dissenting and dissident movements after the establishment of the People's Republic.

- 3 Entitled "The challenge of ethnic nationalism", Chapter 5 is interested less in the development of racial/nationalist sentiments among the minorities of the peripheral regions than in the policy of the centre with regard to these minorities : from the accession of Sun Yat-sen to the presidency of the Republic in 1912, it is evident that the objective of the leaders in Peking, despite certain tactical oscillations, has never ceased to be the construction of a multi-ethnic, centralised nation-state dominated by the Han. The substitution, in the course of the post-Mao period, of a state nationalism for a declining communist ideology is documented and analysed in Chapter 6. The work finishes off with a study of the consequences that, for China's foreign policy and the balance of international relations, are cloaked in this blossoming of nationalism that has coincided with the extremely rapid development of the economy and the consecutive reinforcement of military power and the political influence of Peking. On this subject, the author concludes that Chinese nationalism, essentially defensive and reactive, channelled by a pragmatic government, is far from presenting the dangers that certain observers denounce.
- 4 The work depends on secondary sources, and the historian may find here some disputable points : for example, the shirked analysis of the pro-Japanese (and very un-nationalist) attitude of Sun Yat-sen in 1915 when Japan presented to China its damaging "Twenty-One Demands" (p. 82) ; or the evocation of a peasant anti-imperialism at the end of the 1920s (p. 97) ; or, then again, the description of the anti-American boycott of 1905 as a manifestation of liberal-nationalism (p. 125). But the primary reproach that might be addressed at this study resides more in its great banality.
- 5 It has been a long while in fact since nationalism, in all its diverse forms, first appeared as a key to the history of modern China, and the author does not bring anything greatly new to the subject. However, the care which he takes in arguing and demonstrating what, for the majority of Western historians, goes without saying, suggests that this evidence has not imposed itself in the same fashion on Chinese historians, whose articles and debates are referred to at length. The work thus bears witness to the idea that, despite the opening-up and the intensification of cultural and scientific exchanges, a certain historiographical time-lag persists between China and the West.
- 6 Another interesting and original contribution offered by the work is the haphazardly researched analysis that it provides of the "renaissance" (the term is definitely exaggerated !) of Chinese nationalism after 1978 and more particularly of the efforts of the Chinese Communist Party to encourage and orchestrate this renaissance in the 1990s. This hybrid study, combining political theory, history and reportage, can justly be recorded in the increasingly rich and open dialogue between China and the West, while its author appears to be a "cultural pilot" who is both well informed and striving for objectivity.